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File Personnel-12

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : LESLIE C. DIRKS
Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT : Uniform Promotion System

REFERENCE : Memo from DDCI dated 7 April 78; Same Subject

1. The DDS&T Career Service Board and I have given considerable thought and attention to your recent memorandum on the Uniform Promotion System. In general, we support the goal of identifying and publishing target promotion rates for each of the career services; however we are concerned about offering an unqualified commitment to this procedure when it is impossible at this time to predict with sufficient certainty all of its possible long-range implications. A critical question which arose in our discussions for which we do not have an unequivocal answer is to what steps we would go in separating personnel in order to meet the target promotion rates in any given year. Based on historical experiences in the "R" Career Service, it appears that acceptance of the target rates proposed by the Office of Personnel and insistence that they be met would force the DDS&T in 1980 and beyond either to separate additional personnel at the GS-13, 14 and 15 levels or to curtail

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2. Increased separations would probably entail terminating some personnel in the category of "Valuable Contribution" in addition to all of those falling in the "Low Potential" and "Substandard" categories (the last category would be separated

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in any case). The adverse impact of this policy on morale and the turbulence it would create might far outweigh the salutary effects of publishing mandatory uniform promotion rates. Furthermore, any variances in the rates of attrition below the historical averages, specifically at the higher grade levels, could seriously exacerbate this situation.

3. The DDS&T Career Service Board and I feel strongly that if, indeed, a decision is made to meet the target promotion rates regardless of the consequences, then it is incumbent on the top management of the Agency to spell out these consequences clearly for all employees. It is important that both the positive and negative aspects of the Uniform Promotion Policy be fully understood.

4. Another of our concerns arises from the impossibility of applying the target promotion rates equally to all offices in the S&T Directorate because of the widely different grade structures among these offices. For example, in an office having a smaller ratio of GS-13 positions to GS-12 positions than the Directorate average we would have to accept a rate of promotion to GS-13 below the Directorate-wide target. Thus, a GS-12 in one of our lower graded offices such as NPIC would have a lower probability of promotion than would a GS-12 in ORD which has a significantly higher grade structure. Furthermore, this problem could not be greatly alleviated by inter-office transfers because the skills required by the several offices are significantly different. In my view there is a danger here of raising promotion expectations in some of our offices which we will be unable to meet.

5. Also inherent in the proposed policy is the likelihood that individuals identified for promotion by the panels will oftentimes not be in components possessing the headroom necessary to permit these promotions. And it is not practical in the DDS&T to transfer people from office to office in search of this headroom. Faced with the necessity of meeting the promotion rates, the offices will most likely resort to the PRA alternative, and in a short time the Directorate will have many discrepancies between the grades of the slots and the grades of the people occupying them -- in both directions. One alternative to the PRA route is to designate by panel action a list of persons who will be promoted as headroom becomes available or

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as possible transfers to jobs having the necessary headroom are identified. Thus there would be a single date on which selections for promotions were made but some of these promotion actions would occur at a later time.

6. Still other concerns include the legality of making additional headroom at the higher grades by singling out people for separation because they are eligible for retirement, the likelihood of promoting average performers to higher levels than are merited to meet quotas, and the fact that low performers must be notified two consecutive years before separation thus affecting their prompt dismissal to provide needed headroom.

7. Many of these concerns could be readily addressed if we were to view the published promotion rates as targets which we would try hard to meet but which would not force us to separate valuable employees in order to do so. The Office of Personnel could audit regularly the performance of each directorate in meeting its promotion goals, call attention to major departures, and require the directorate to identify possible corrective action.

8. Considering the complexity of this issue and the possible adverse implications of its adoption, I think additional discussion is warranted before proceeding further.

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LESLIE C. DIRKS

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